



PREVENTION TALK

PARENTS ENCOURAGING HEALTHY CHOICES ON HEALTH, NUTRITION, EXERCISE

WRITTEN BY LYNDA KAMERRER
EDITED BY KRIS GABRIELSEN

Issue Number 25

CSAP'S WESTERN CENTER FOR THE
APPLICATION OF PREVENTION TECHNOLOGIES
JULIE HOGAN, PH.D. DIRECTOR

Good health is one of the important building blocks for youth who are ready to learn, develop socially and intellectually, and steer clear of substance abuse. This issue of Prevention Talk highlights a few simple ways for parents to promote healthy lifestyle choices for children of all ages while increasing youth protective factors. Building protective factors helps buffer young people from risks for substance abuse and other problem behaviors. Preparing healthy meals together, as well as exercising as a family, can provide opportunities to teach skills for successful involvement in the family.

REMEMBER:

Take advantage of opportunities to involve your teen in positive family activities, and then recognize them for it!

As parents establish family guidelines, communicate their expectations, and consistently follow those standards, youth are supported in making good choices.¹ An example of a clear guideline for snacks would be a list of fruits, vegetables, and beverages posted on the fridge, and having those foods on hand. Including children in the planning of those snacks, giving them choices, and delegating responsibilities provide meaningful opportunities for involvement in the family. Food preparation and mealtime can be a rich social event. Being part of the process of choosing foods and playing helpful roles in the family give children a feeling of belonging, and parents a chance to praise children for accomplishing their chores.

Two other essential ingredients for maintaining healthy standards in the family are monitoring and providing consequences. When parents are consistent on both, children are better able to follow the family guidelines. An example of how to build

protective factors while promoting good health through diet and exercise might be setting aside 10 minutes after dinner once a week to review the week's meals. Parents could take this opportunity to praise the behaviors they want to continue and make adjustments to keep everyone on course. Finding out what is not working tells parents where they need to teach additional skills. The family could choose to celebrate their progress with a walk in the neighborhood or a game of catch outside.

THINK ABOUT:

- Adopting healthy behaviors is much easier in a community environment with norms and policies supporting those choices.
- Check in with your teen, get some "just the two of us" time, and let them know you care about their health.
- Setting limits on television viewing and computer time allows parents and children more time for exercising, conversation, reading, and hobbies.

ACTION STEPS:

- Make it a family decision to eat a healthy diet and share meals together.
- Visit http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_fit/nutrition/food_labels.html for ideas on food label literacy.
- Advocate for community resources and policies that support easy access to recreation for all ages.

For more information call:

SOURCES:

¹ Hawkins, J.D., Catalano, R.J. (2002). Getting started-how to prevent drug use in your family. In Channing Bete (Ed.), Guiding good choices program: Family guide. South Deerfield, MA:Channing Bete Company, Inc.